

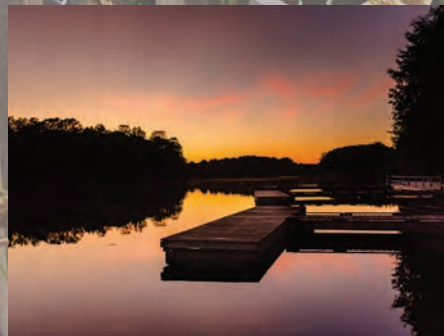
Outdoor *Delaware*

SUMMER 2018

50 WAYS *to* ESCAPE *the* ORDINARY

ALL ON DNREC PROPERTY

Awesome Trails • Fun Festivals • Bayshore Stops • Ways to Volunteer
Photo Ops • Towers • Water Trails • Historic Attractions • Fishing Holes • Eateries



Frontlines

Escape the Ordinary on DNREC Lands

THIS ISSUE OF *Outdoor Delaware* magazine is something special. It is mostly about having fun and exploring – on DNREC lands. If you live in Delaware, you’ve probably been to one of DNREC’s seashore state parks or walked along the popular northern park trails around Wilmington and Newark. In this edition, however, we share with you some of our less traveled hiking and paddling trails, our lesser known festivals and attractions, and the convenient, fun eateries on DNREC property offering handy meals and snacks right where you recreate. You’ve likely heard about DNREC-sponsored volunteer coastal cleanup, but did you know you can be part of a DNREC-sponsored archeological dig, or be a bat counter? We can connect you with these unusual events and other fun, valuable and educational activities that you may not have heard about.

In one day, or if you prefer more leisurely visits, in one weekend you can visit five different towers on DNREC lands that offer spectacular views and interesting history that may not have been on your radar. Only one is not climbable, but worth a look because of its interesting purpose and history, revealed in this issue.

Do you fish? One of the articles here will encourage you to ex-



plore some new places to wet a line and see some new landscapes on DNREC’s wildlife areas. Another article will give you a sampling of a few special spots along Delaware’s Bayshore Byway which travels near the coastline of the state.

DNREC has endless opportunities to have fun, improve your health, and learn about nature. By no means intended to list all the DNREC attractions you may not know about, we hope the items highlighted in this edition will serve to entice you, your family and friends to go outside and explore and learn about not only these, but even more ways to escape the ordinary on DNREC lands.

SHAWN M. GARVIN, SECRETARY

Editor’s Note: Look for more DNREC “opportunities in nature” as a regular feature in future issues of *Outdoor Delaware* magazine.



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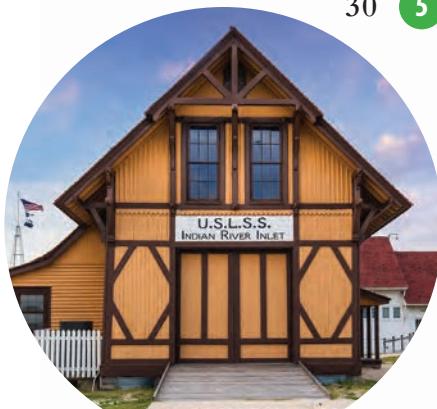


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On the Cover:

Summer Clouds
Over the Dune—
Delaware Seashore
State Park
© 2018
by Larry Knox



50 WAYS *to* ESCAPE *the* ORDINARY

ALL ON DNREC PROPERTY

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5 Awesome Trails

LESS TRAVELED

Blackbird Creek Reserve Trails

1 A MOST APPEALING winter or fall hike or run awaits you on the trails at Blackbird Creek Reserve, just off Blackbird Landing Road near Townsend. As part of the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve, the reserve offers many opportunities to learn and paddle. But early on a weekend or during weekdays, you may find yourself alone on the leisurely trails. Particularly appealing in cooler months because the sun is not deterred by tree canopy in most places, what becomes striking right away is the soft and quiet mossy/grassy trail itself, as opposed to gravel, packed earth, or paving.

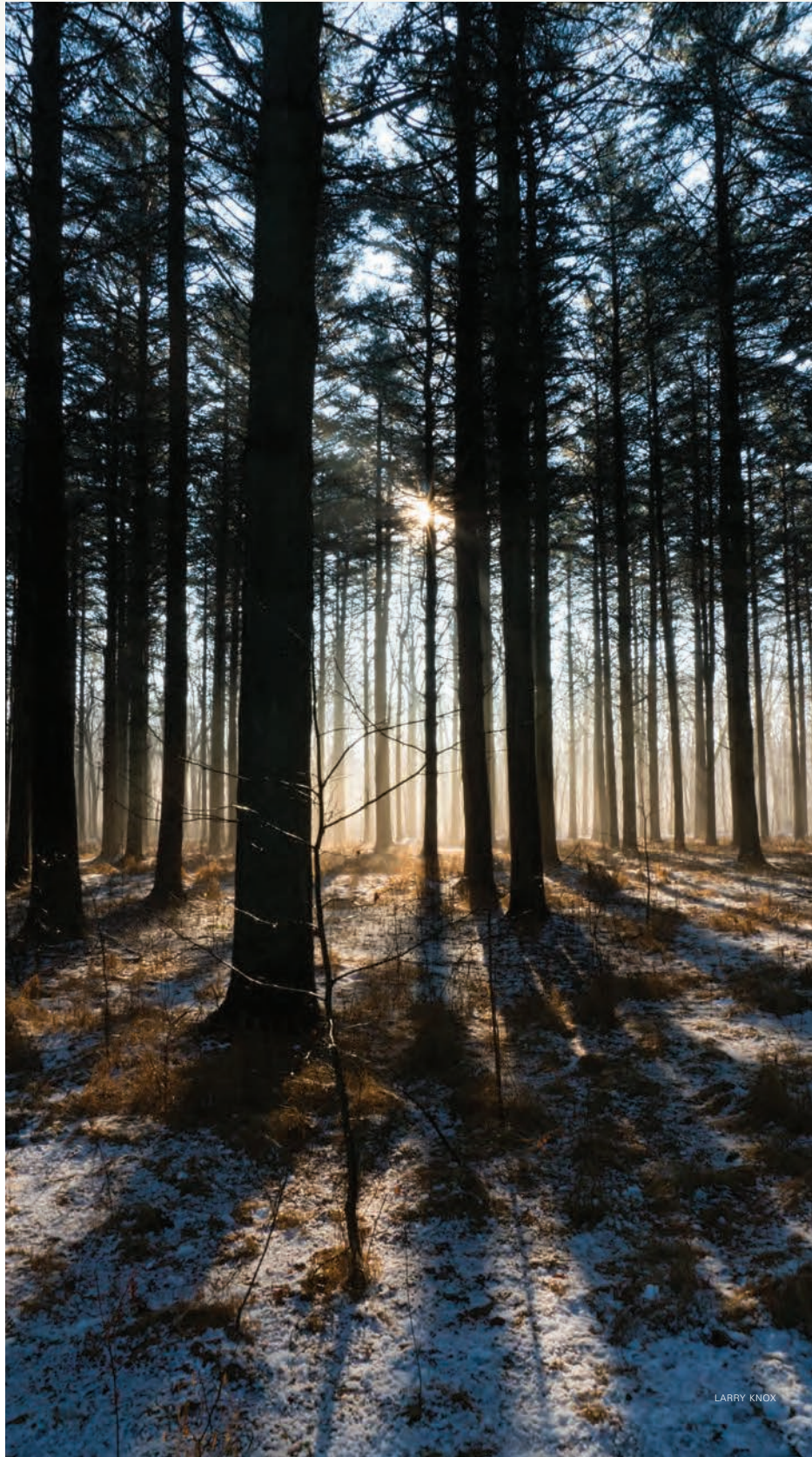
Make sure you sling a set of binoculars over your shoulder because birds abound, with small bird-viewing stations where you can take a break from your hike, sit in the shade and ponder the beauty of the creek that makes an appearance for some distance along the trails. On your other shoulder, make sure you carry your camera for some great wildlife and nature photos. You may see bald eagles, osprey, river otters, whitetail deer, wild turkey, great blue herons and more.

The longest trail, a 5K jaunt, circles the restoration demonstration area, where seedlings are thriving and bluebird boxes (and their spring inhabitants) are plentiful.

The reserve is open daily from dawn till dusk and has a parking area and porta-potty.



LARRY KNOX



LARRY KNOX



Auburn Heights Trail

2 THE TRAIL USE LISTING for this trail is: hiking, biking and steam cars. That's right, steam cars. Hiking this trail could be unique

to all your hiking experiences because you could actually be passed by a poke-along steam car from the Marshall Steam Museum, located within the preserve at the historic Auburn Heights estate. Although this trail promises to be a much more traveled trail – as the nearby former NVF property in Yorklyn is further developed into multi-uses – the 1.3-mile stretch of paved trail at the Auburn Heights Preserve currently offers a leisurely hiking or biking experience. Despite the occasional steam car passing by, it's quite safe because it's 12 feet wide. This mostly-sunny trail showcases views of Red Clay Creek and a panorama winding through the pastoral rolling fields of the Auburn Valley.

Eventually, the 1.3-mile section of the Auburn Heights Trail will be connected to others in the preserve and nearby to create a 6-mile loop. When the trail is completed, visitors will be treated to a variety of views, passing by many historic sites and over historic bridges that will be relocated here from other states.

In the meantime, add this and the nearby half-mile Trolley Trail to your "healthy habits" list. Unlike the longer trail, the Trolley Trail is crushed stone, and a short walk. It runs along the Auburn Mill millrace and completes a loop alongside the Red Clay Creek. You can hike or bike this one – but no steam cars allowed.

Trailhead and parking is just off Bengie Road for both trails.



DNREC DIV. OF PARKS & REC

Tips for visiting trails and Bayshore stops during summer months:

- Apply insect repellent before venturing out.
- Wear light-colored and light-weight, breathable clothing.
- Be sure to tuck your shirt into your pants, and your pants into your socks.
- Bring water and stay hydrated.
- Know the weather forecast and be prepared for sudden storms.
- Stay on the trails and have a map handy.

Assawoman Canal Trail

3 MANY OF THE "ESCAPES" described in this issue fulfill more than one appeal as an adventure – Assawoman Canal Trail in Ocean View is just one example. It is a less-traveled trail for sure, but it also gives the visitor a glimpse of Delaware history, plus you can launch a kayak or canoe for free near the Route 26 bridge.

Jump off the beaten path at Central Avenue, Osprey Lane or Route 26 and follow the all-weather trail along the old Assawoman Canal. The trail was hand-dug by Italian immigrants 125 years ago, when roads were rare in what was a very rural area of eastern Sussex County. The 3.9-mile canal was used to transport local strawberries and other produce and goods to market. It was part of a protected inland waterway system that allowed boats to travel from the Delaware Bay all the way to Sinapuxent Bay in Ocean City, Maryland. Nearly 99 acres of the canal property was conveyed to DNREC in 1990, and the planning for a trail soon began.

The trail is an out-and-back hike giving you about a 2-mile stretch of your legs. At some points the trail runs behind some homes, but the woody, secluded areas are worth the occasional reminder of civilization because of the spectacular up-close view of the canal and the wildlife that call it home. Bikes are allowed, but due to the shortness of the trail, a walk will give you more time to absorb the special nature of the trail and the critters. Plans to extend the canal trail to the other side of Route 26 are in the works.

Parking and restrooms are available at the Town Road parking lot.



Let's go "Plogging"

Join the new "Plogging" fitness craze that started in Sweden and has made its way to the U.S. The term is a mash-up of the word "jog" and the Swedish term "plocka upp," meaning to pick up – trash in this case. So, if you pick up and carry a bag of trash while you jog (or walk), you'll be helping the environment and your waistline.

Prickly Pear Trail

4 THIS TRAIL CAME by its name honestly – prickly pear plants are prominent all along the Prickly Pear Trail (say that three times quickly!) as it runs 3.5 miles through young forests and meadows to open up at one point to a spectacular view of Beach Cove off Indian River Bay.

The bright yellow and intense blossoms are a treat for the eyes, and occur usually around the summer solstice. They are a prelude to the fruit from which this thorny plant gets its name. These cacti are actually native to the area, and it is likely that local Native Americans used them as a source of food and medicine.

Besides the large, jumbled clumps of prickly pear plants along the route, this unpaved pathway offers a special treat at its end: a small, secret beach where you can gaze out at the cove. You might even see egrets, herons, deer and a turtle along the way. At times, the beach is strewn with dozens of horseshoe crabs and shells – a



ABBY SHEPARD

perfect learning opportunity for children and adults alike. By the way, if you see a horseshoe crab on its back, do your best to safely turn it over – it will appreciate it. An old abandoned barn still piled with hay intrigues most hikers enough to take a peek inside. The trail offers shade and bright sun, and lots of quiet.

It is located in Delaware Seashore State Park in the Fresh Pond area, with parking available at the trailhead on Hickman Road in Ocean View.

Check before you go!

State Wildlife Areas:

Parts of state wildlife areas are open to hunting, so check DNREC's hunting guide for season dates and locations, and consider wearing hunter orange if you plan to venture into these areas during hunting season. For more information, call 302-739-9912 on weekdays.



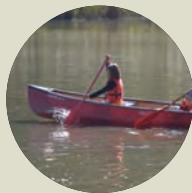
Conservation Access Passes



A Conservation Access Pass is required for any registered motor vehicle that's used to access state wildlife areas for hunting, bird-watching, photography or other recreational activities. These can be purchased online at DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife's website: <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw>, from an authorized license agent or call 302-739-9918 for more information. You can get one free annual vehicle pass with the purchase of a hunting license. That vehicle pass will be valid to access state wildlife areas for both hunting and non-hunting activities.

Check the tides!

If you're going for a paddle in a kayak or canoe on tidal waterways, check the tide tables online at <http://www.saltwatertides.com/dynamic.dir/delaware-sites.html>.



State parks passes:

An annual parks pass can be purchased online: www.destateparks.com, from any park office, or from certain retailers. Or call 302-739-9220 for more information.



Burton Island Trail

5 PART OF THE APPEAL of walking a new trail should be to explore what makes it special – why go there? Take Burton's Island Trail, part of the Burton's Island Nature Preserve in Delaware Seashore State Park. The 1.3 mile loop trail around Burton Island provides the experience of being in the middle of a tidal salt marsh without getting your feet wet. Upon the amazingly long boardwalks (totaling 740 feet) resting just above the marsh grass, you can experience what a heron or an egret might, as it stands in the middle of the swaying grasses awash with brine and teeming with small crabs and other critters that are there for the picking. The feel, the sights and the sounds make for a unique and very special experience.

Of course, what's a spectacular feeding area to a bird if there are no secluded nest sites with a good tree canopy and underlying shrubs nearby? But Burton Island has all that too, as can be seen from the trail that also meanders through soaring pines, with an abundance of soft pine needles for nest-building and black cherries and bayberries to nibble on.

This trail is best enjoyed in spring and fall, or on a winter day, to avoid the annoying bugs and ticks that can only be kept at bay in the summer by covering all exposed skin, wearing a hat and boots, and using bug spray.

This trail is definitely tucked away: Take the Inland Road exit just north of Indian River Inlet Bridge and follow the road to the end passing Hammerhead's Restaurant and DNREC's Delaware Seashore State Park office, 29415 Inlet Road, on the left. Continue past the large storage building on the left and park in the gravel parking lot behind the building. The trailhead is just off the parking area.

DNREC DIV. OF PARKS & REC



5 Fun Festivals

WITH A GROOVY VIBE

Market Fair: First State Heritage Park

1 LEAVE THE 21ST CENTURY BEHIND during the First State Heritage Park's 18th Century Market Fair in downtown Dover this fall. The Market Fair recreates the sights and sounds of autumn market fairs held on The Green in the mid-1700s. This year's Market Fair is happening, as always, on the first Saturday in November – Nov. 3, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Enjoy 18th-century entertainment like Signora Bella, who brings to life the tradition of the travelling performer as she juggles knives and flaming torches on the rola bola and the slackrope. Learn about 18th century medicinal practices from the humorous Dr. Balthazar, and watch the comical interactive performance of Mr. Peter Gardiner – Colonial Conjuror. You can also chat with living history characters like Timothy, the 18th-century Irish Linen Worker, as you watch him turn ordinary-looking flax straw into linen fabric using authentic tools of the period. Watch demonstrations of traditional trades and crafts like glass making, woodworking, blacksmithing and spinning.

18th-century-style music and dancers add to the period atmosphere. Tour the historic buildings of the Green, including Old State House, John Bell House, Johnson Victrola Museum, Legisla-



ABBY SHEPARD

tive Hall, Woodburn & Hall House, the Biggs Museum of American Art, and the First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries.

Children will enjoy the hands-on activities, and vendors and refreshments round out the day. Enjoy free fun for all ages – all with an 18th-century twist. For more information, visit: <http://www.destateparks.com/marketfair/>

DNREC at the Delaware State

2 UNLIKE ANY OTHER attraction at the Delaware State Fair, the exhibits and people in the DNREC building entertain, educate, and challenge children and adults alike with interactive exhibits and a scavenger hunt game that rewards the players with special prizes.

From the time you walk in the door, you will see interesting things, learn things, laugh at things and relax in the air-conditioned theater while observing demonstrations, many with live animals such as horseshoe crabs that can be picked up. And, the theater features videos on everything from a zipline tree-top adventure in a state park to learning about life in a wetland.

There's a stream and wetland exhibit with flowing water and fish, and interactive water games for the kids. Help judge a photo contest, learn about volunteer activities in the eco-café, or try your hand at the "Bin It

to Win It" recycling game. You can explore the Delaware Byway as you test your knowledge of coastal wildlife habitats and special little towns. And that's just the beginning – you'll learn how to help our air, how to save

energy and money, about nature in the state parks and much more.

The exhibits game book will challenge you as you move throughout the building, and as a player, you will receive a useful item or native plant as you exit the building.

The 2018 Delaware State Fair is July 19-23, and is located along the west side of Rt. 13 in Harrington. The DNREC building is near the north gate of the fairgrounds. Visitors pay a fee to enter the fairgrounds, but the DNREC building alone is worth the admission. Along with the DNREC building, the fair also offers food, rides, shows, music and the staple of all state fairs – lots of live farm animals.



DNREC



Boo-B-Que By the Sea

3

LOOKING FOR A FUN FAMILY outing that combines surf, sand and BBQ? Delaware Seashore State Park's annual Boo-B-Que offers all three. Mark your calendars for this Halloween-themed event and barbecue competition on the third weekend in October, with dates and schedules to be posted at www.boo-que.com.

Sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Society, a competition cooking organization and the world's largest non-profit group of barbecue and grilling enthusiasts, the Boo-B-Que is open to both backyard grillers and pros. Competitors come from all over the East Coast to compete for a cash prize as well as bragging rights as the best BBQ chef.

In addition to the cook-off action, activities include a 5K run/walk, Halloween-oriented kids' activities, food and craft brews.

For more information on Delaware Seashore State Park, including weekend camping information, visit www.delstatetateparks.com.

ABBY SHEPARD

Blackbird Creek Festival

2

COME CELEBRATE Blackbird Creek Reserve, one of the most natural areas in all of Delaware. The Blackbird Creek Festival, presented by DNREC and the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve (DNERR), brings together local businesses, non-profits and government agencies in one place to celebrate the cultural and natural heritage of the Delaware Bay.

Along the banks of beautiful Blackbird Creek, you will discover traditional demonstrations by a blacksmith, hands-on canoe and kayak lessons, live music, and children's activities including crafts, free face painting and colonial-era activities. You can also browse the works of artisans and exhibitors, enjoy hay rides, take a guided

hike of the reserve led by a Delaware State Forester, and check out Native American demonstrations. Local food vendors are also onsite to provide a variety of food and snacks.

The Blackbird Creek Festival is held each year in

October. This year, the festival will take place on Saturday, October 20, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Blackbird Creek Reserve, 801 Blackbird Landing Road, Townsend, DE 19734, upstream from Delaware Route 9 at Taylors Bridge.

The festival is free to attend, and the entire family will enjoy this day in the great outdoors. During the rest of the year, the reserve is open to the public from dawn until dusk, seven days a week and free of charge.

You can get the latest details on the festival here: <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/coastal/DNERR/Pages/DNERRBlackbirdCreekFallFestival.aspx>



DNERR



DNERR



PHIL MILLER

Recycled Cardboard Boat Regatta

5 THIS ONE IS A HOOT! One of the most unique events you'll find on the water, the Recycled Cardboard Boat Regatta in Blades offers people of all ages a fun and exciting way to learn about Delaware's waterways. Whether you build your own cardboard boat to compete in the races, or come to watch to see if they actually float, you'll go home with a smile on your face and important information on how to protect Delaware's aquatic resources.

The fifth annual regatta will be marked on Aug. 4, and when you get to the marina, you'll see crowds of eager spectators lined along the boat ramp and docks. You'll make your way through groups of contestants unloading their cardboard creations, adding final touches and checking out their competition.

After you've snuck a peek at the fleet of unusual and whimsical boats, head to the pavilion and enjoy music, food, and ex-



PHIL MILLER

hibits from the Reclaim our River (ROR) partnership. Soon the races will start, and with the pristine Nanticoke River in the distance, you'll see the captains take off, paddling as hard as they can with the sounds of cheering and laughter.

The Regatta is part of the ROS's Nanticoke Series – a partnership among DNREC, Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, the Delaware Nature Society and the Town of Blades. The program offers monthly

events, workshops and recreational opportunities created to connect residents with their waterways and share information on how to protect them.

The regatta takes place at the Nanticoke River Public Marine Park, 26 N. Market Street, Blades, DE 19973.

Visit delawarewatersheds.org for more event information including a video with footage from previous years.

Day-of registration begins at 11 a.m. Judging begins at 12 p.m. Races start promptly at 12:30 p.m.

FEES PER BOAT

Early Bird (by July 27): \$20

July 27 – Aug 4: \$30

Multiple Categories: + \$5/category

5 Bayshore Stops

WITH SPECIAL APPEAL

New Aquatic Resources Education Center

1 TRAVELING ROUTE 9 takes drivers on a tour of the Delaware Bayshore's many facets, from its waving marsh grasses sweeping out to river and bay, to its picturesque small waterfront towns. Just north of Woodland Beach, where this scenic byway winds between waterfowl impoundments, DNREC's new Aquatic Resources Education Center (AREC) stands on a patch of high ground, offering the opportunity to learn more about this uniquely beautiful natural area.

Inside the new center, you can get up close and personal with a variety of aquatic species through a transparent wall of large fish tanks in the multi-purpose space. Outdoor educational spaces also include a Bayshore Byway interpretive area and a trail with signage highlighting the natural and cultural history of the area.

Just across Route 9, a 940-foot boardwalk over the marsh offers magnificent views of the saltmarsh extending out to the Delaware Bay as well as a unique close-up look at the marsh and some of its inhabitants. In spring and fall, fifth graders and their teachers come from all over the state to use the boardwalk to explore our tidal saltmarsh ecosystem through AREC's hands-on, Department of Education-endorsed Eco-Explorers program. The boardwalk area is open to the public most of the time, except during these field trips.

AREC also offers the "Take a Kid Fishing" program, at the center and other locations, to introduce children and their families to fishing, and hosts other special events and public programs.

So why not get to know AREC today? Visitors are welcome at the Aquatic Resources Education Center. However, on weekdays, please call ahead at 302-735-8689 to check school tour schedules if you wish to see inside the center or stroll the boardwalk and trails. For more information about AREC, visit www.de.gov/arec.

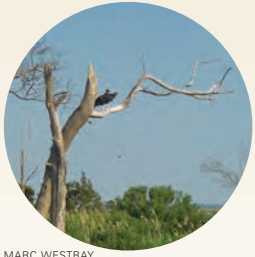


DNREC F&W



GARY KREAMER

LARRY KNOX



MARC WESTRAY

Prime Hook State Wildlife Area

2 FOR BIRDERS, arborists, hikers, and solitude seekers, there's no place like Prime Hook State Wildlife Area, located at the end of Little Neck Road just off Route 1

north of Lewes. With its 662 pristine acres of forests and freshwater wetlands, this unique state-owned preserve is often overshadowed by its 11,000-acre federal neighbor, Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge.

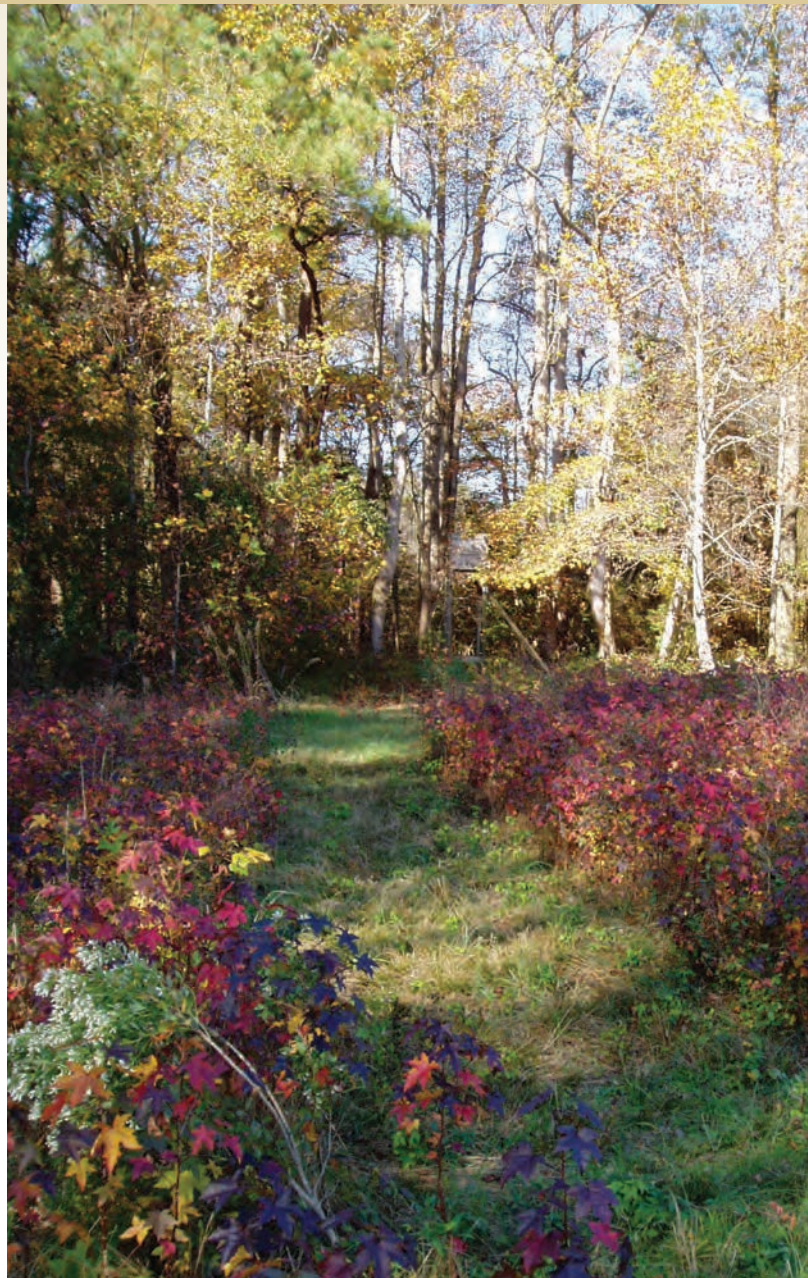
When Prime Hook Wildlife Area was established in 1958, it comprised the first protected lands on the lower Delaware Bay. Today, its majestic mature forest habitat features a rare combination of large white oaks and tulip poplars towering over a dense stand of American holly, Delaware's state tree. Reforestation and habitat restoration areas also offer unique environmental work-in-progress views.

Upon entering Prime Hook, visitors will find several small, informal trails leading to 10 deer stands. In addition to providing hunting access in season, these trails wind through a variety of habitats, including swampland bordering Prime Hook Creek. Opportunities abound for hikers to trek the terrain, for birders to enjoy the sights and sounds of a thriving songbird community, and for arborists to see a variety of native trees and plants.

Parts of state wildlife areas are open to hunting, so check DN-REC's hunting guide for season dates and locations, and consider wearing hunter orange if you plan to venture into these areas during hunting season. For more information, call 302-739-9912 on weekdays.

During hunting season, waterfowl hunters can hunt from blinds under the joint federal/state program; the area also is open for squirrel and wild turkey hunting, as well as deer season. For more information on Prime Hook, visit the Delaware Hunting & Trapping Guide and Wildlife Area Maps on DNREC's website, www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Pages/Guides.

A Conservation Access Pass is required.



ROB GANO



ROBERT COXE

Lighthouse Road

3 VERY FEW PLACES along the Bayshore offer this degree of solitude. Lighthouse Road is a little-known path east of Route 9 near Smyrna. Just south of the Smyrna River, the path follows an old lane leading from a small parking lot out to the Delaware Bay.

An open walk, Lighthouse Road offers peace and quiet as you pass by several small tree "islands" often inhabited by local birds and other wildlife. Don't be surprised to see deer, otters or harmless water snakes that also use this same path.

To reach the parking area, turn east from Route 9 onto Lighthouse Road near the Mallard Lodge. Park in the small lot at the gate and enjoy your walk.



ANTHONY GONZON



CHRISTOPHER BENNETT

Pea Patch Island

4 FOR BIRDERS SEEKING an ideal spot to view herons, egrets and ibis, there's no place like Pea Patch Island. Located in the Delaware River off Delaware City, the island that also features Fort Delaware is home to about 2,000 pairs of birds at the peak of nesting season, which is busiest from about April to June.

The majestic great blue herons arrive first, building, repairing and defending nest sites by late February. By the end of March, Great Egrets have also begun nesting. By late April, little blue and tricolored herons, cattle and snowy egrets, black-crowned and yellow-crowned night-herons and glossy ibis have joined the busy heronry located in the trees and marsh at the north end of the island.

With camera, binoculars, and/or scopes in hand, birders have three good options for viewing this remarkable heronry, without disturbing the birds. From Delaware City's Battery Park at the end of Clinton Street you can watch herons and egrets pass overhead as they fly to and from the island. On the island, a wildlife observation platform, located along the prison camp trail, offers a great view of the heronry. And, thirdly, boating birders can make a slow pass by the island to see roosting herons and catch glimpses of their nesting activity.

Ted Harvey Conservation Area – Logan's Lane Tract Bayfront Beach

5 IF YOU ARE LOOKING for unspoiled solitude on a quiet Bay-shore beach, look no further than this undiscovered stretch of sand and waving beach grasses between Kitts Hummock and Bowers Beach, which can be accessed through Kent County's Ted Harvey Conservation Area just south of Dover.

From Route 9, drive east on Kitts Hummock Road, past the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve and the FOP Lodge, and look for the rustic wood sign for Ted Harvey Conservation Area. Turn right on the dirt entry road, and take the first left off the main road onto Logan's Lane.

No matter the season, the winding road, with its canopy of trees and glimpses of wildlife and birds, is a soothing drive out toward the bay. The road ends at a gravel circle with a small boat launch and a gate to control motor vehicle entry.

Take the path around the gate for a leisurely stroll to the beach, with sweeping views of impoundments to the left and lush open marshlands to the right. Just past the water control area – occasionally you might find an angler or two here – the path narrows with head-high beach grasses on the both sides, then opens onto the beach.

Looking left and right, you'll see the

cottages of Kitts and Bowers, or maybe boats offshore – but these are in the distance. Here, you can walk the beach, watch busy shorebirds looking for snacks at the tideline, flip stranded horseshoe crabs, gather shells, and breathe deep the fresh bay air – and likely see no one else nearby.

Bring your camera and binoculars ...

Parts of state wildlife areas are open to hunting, so check DNREC's hunting guide for season dates and locations, and consider wearing hunter orange if you plan to venture into these areas during hunting season. For more information, call 302-739-9912 on weekdays.

A Conservation Access Pass is required.



JOANNA WILSON

Tips for visiting trails and Bayshore stops during summer months:

- Apply insect repellent before venturing out.
- Wear light colored and lightweight breathable clothing
- Be sure to tuck your shirt into your pants and your pants into your socks.
- Bring water and stay hydrated.
- Know the weather forecast and be prepared for sudden storms.
- Stay on the trails and have a map handy.



5 UNUSUAL WAYS TO Volunteer



APRIL ABEL

Civil War reenactors

1 A HISTORICAL MOVIE can be hugely educational, but historical reenactments that bring to life the drama of events are even more telling than a movie. So step back 150 years, when the Union Army ran a prison camp at Fort Delaware. Be a Civil War Living History Interpreter. Help visitors experience life at this historic (and some say haunted) fort during the Civil War. Reenact military life – marching, administration, firing a gunpowder charge of an 8-inch Columbiad gun cannon, and other facets of what life was like for the members of the 1st Delaware Heavy Artillery. You can also be part of reenacting civilian life, including kitchen, laundry and other domestic chores, blacksmithing and other period interpretations.

All are all portrayed by volunteers like you who assist in conducting Civil War-era Living History educational and interpretive programs at Fort Delaware.

You must attend training and be willing to volunteer two workdays per year, as scheduled with a park interpreter. For more information, call DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation at 302-739-9200, or visit destateparks.com.



DNREC DIV OF PARKS & REC



DENNIS MURPHY

Piping Plovers

2 HAVE YOU EVER SEEN a piping plover chick? They look like cotton balls on toothpicks, don't they? Too cute. But, despite the "cute factor," our feathered friends really need our help. To increase breeding success, DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife depends on volunteers to help let the general public know when they need to avoid disturbing piping plovers nesting on Delaware's beaches. Parts of the beach are closed to the public from March 1 to September 1 during the plover breeding season. But, people still sometimes enter the closed areas. By doing so, they can harm the birds by stepping on eggs and/or chicks, or disturb adults, causing them to leave their nests.

Volunteers can help piping plovers by educating the beach-going public about how to help prevent disturbance to endangered plover adults and chicks. The need for volunteers depends on when birds with nests and chicks are on the beach, which varies from year to year, but the peak of the season is May and June.

Volunteers should be able to walk to monitoring stations on the beach, which can be as far as 1/2-mile away from parking areas. You will be offered information on piping plover life history and conservation efforts, and training on how to engage with the public.

To volunteer, contact Audrey DeRose Wilson at 302-735-8667, or by email at Audrey.DeRose-Wilson@state.de.us (preferred).

Time Travelers

3 HOLD HISTORY, literally, in your hands – Native American and Revolutionary War artifacts – and all kinds of history comes alive before your eyes. Dig up Delaware's past by becoming a Time Traveler.

Time Travelers volunteers work one-on-one with professionally trained archaeologists, and help do real excavations throughout the state. Recent projects include exploring historic ruins at Brandywine Creek State Park, excavating at the 18th century Bell House in Dover, and looking for a Native American site near Delaware Seashore State Park.

Archaeologists can only predict what they will find, but they never know for sure. For example, at the Bell House, Time Travelers found several pieces of lead type. This suggests that the house was not just a tavern, but may have also housed a printing press at some point in history. Time Travelers have also found many different types of historic ceramics, glass, tobacco pipes, and more. All of these artifacts help us learn about the people who once called Delaware home.

Discovering new things about old places is just one of the ways volunteers can be involved in real life history and archaeology. No experience is necessary to volunteer. Those with disabilities or hesitation about physical labor are still welcome and encouraged to join – archeology offers jobs for everyone.



APRIL ABEL

The program is open to all ages. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult; 10 and under will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To sign up, go to our Facebook page, "Delaware State Parks – Stewardship Program," and click the "Sign Up" button. Lots of projects are planned in all three counties.



NATHAN NAZDROWICZ



NATHAN NAZDROWICZ

The Delaware Amphibian and Reptile Atlas

4 THEY MAY SEEM creepy-crawly to some, but for those who like turtles, frogs, salamanders and snakes, helping count and monitor these important wildlife – collectively known as "herps" – is a fun and rewarding experience. You'll be helping to create a "Herp Atlas" and be on the cutting edge of a new and exciting project.

The Delaware Amphibian and Reptile Atlas is a five-year (2018-2022), citizen-scientist project being initiated by DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife to document the current distribution of amphibians and reptiles throughout Delaware. The survey will collect information on species to support future research, conservation and protection efforts.

A total of 63 species of amphibians and reptiles are native to Delaware. Yet, we don't really understand how they are distributed in the state. With habitat loss, disease and climate change potentially threatening herps, understanding distribution patterns on a statewide scale is critically important.

Data will be used to determine amphibian and reptile distribution, which will also establish a baseline for determining any changes.

To volunteer and for information on proper protocol for data collection and reporting, contact Nate Nazdrowicz at 302-735-8688 or nathan.nazdrowicz@state.de.us



CAL BUTCHKOSKI

Bat Spotters

5 ARE YOU WILD ABOUT BATS? Here's a program where you can hang out with your flying mammal friends. DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife has a program called "Bat Spotters" that enables you to keep an eye on how bat maternity colonies are doing. These are groups of female bats raising their young together. You might find a summer colony in a barn, attic, tree, bat box or under a bridge – anywhere a group of bats hang out. Tracking the numbers of adult females early in summer tells biologists roughly how bats returned to the colony from hibernation. Counts of adults and pups flying in July give biologists critical information about how well the bats are reproducing.

Did you know that bats are the only mammals that can fly? To gain the energy



DNREC

needed to nurse their young, female bats will eat the equivalent of their body weight in insects each night. Having a lifespan of five to 20 years and raising only one pup per summer (although some species have twins), bats are loyal and will return to the same roost every year. Bats provide a valuable and naturally organic service to people – we do not miss the mosquitoes, beetles, moths, and crop pests that bats eat!

But bats are in trouble. A disease, White Nose Syndrome, has caused major mortal-

ity at winter hibernation sites in the Northeast and elsewhere. That's why volunteers are being asked to find or adopt a bat colony and count them as they leave their roosts to feed in the evenings. If you don't know of any roost sites, you can use the contact below to adopt one in your area.

Training, including data collection protocol, and datasheets are provided, so volunteers will know exactly what to do.

To volunteer, contact:
Katelyn Rembecki: 302-735-8674 or Katelyn.
Rembecki@state.
de.us



DNREC

5 Photo Ops

YOU'LL WANT TO SHOOT



1 *Lums Pond Sunset* | Abby Shepard



2

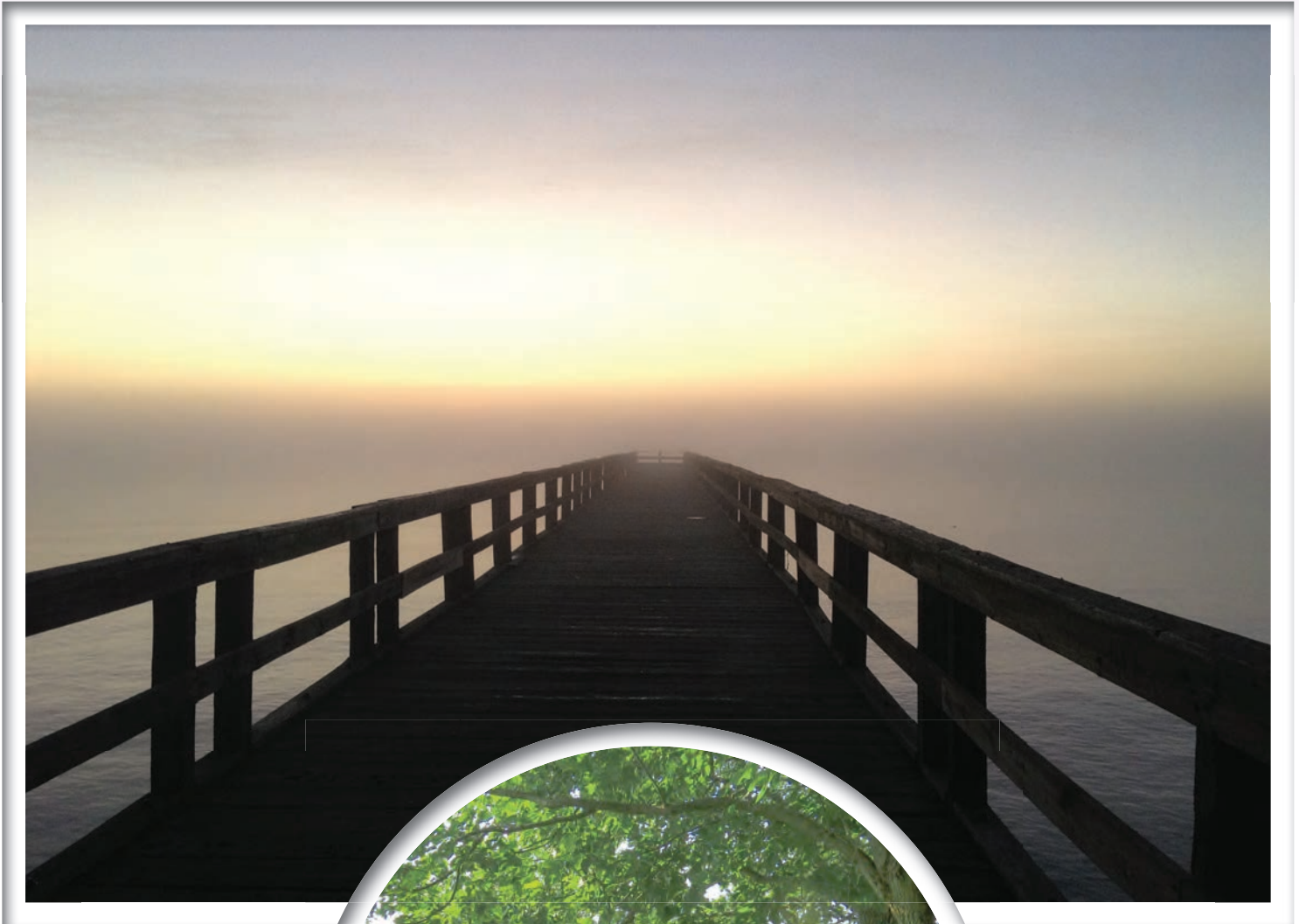
Taylor's Gut | Woodland Beach State Wildlife Area | Jane Mruk



3

Brandquine Creek State Park | Larry Knox

4 *Sunrise, Port Mahon Fishing Pier* | Karen Bennett



5 *St. Jones Reserve Trail* | Stephanie Seeman

5 Towers

THAT TEMPT A VISIT



APRIL ABEL



ABBY SHEPARD

Rockford Water Tower



ABBY SHEPARD

DATING BACK to 1901, Rockford Observation and Water Tower at Rockford State Park in Wilmington is the centerpiece of this beautiful park. It could be a setting for a Victorian-era movie, with its leisurely rolling and sprawling greens, picnic areas, and shade trees that show spectacular colors in the fall.

The 115-foot-high tower was built to serve two purposes – as both a water tower and an observation tower. A circular staircase of 132

steps up to the highest level winds around a steel cylinder water tank. The pinnacle of the tower is an impressive arched viewing area that affords 360-degree views of the park and the Brandywine River.

In the early 20th century, the public was not allowed into the tower because of the risk of explosions from the DuPont Experimental Station directly across the river, where gun powder was being produced. With that liability long gone, the tower welcomes all visitors, free of charge, to enjoy the panoramic views.

The park is open from 8 a.m. to sunset, as is the tower, and there is a park entrance fee. The park can be accessed off of West 18th Street in Wilmington.

Assawoman Wildlife Area Observation Tower

FEW PLACES in Delaware enable you to climb high enough to see the landscape spread out before you as a shorebird in flight might see it – the mix of grassy land and water just before it lands on the salt marsh. It's a special treat since Delaware is the lowest lying state in the nation.

The Assawoman Wildlife Area observation tower, near South Bethany, provides a bird-like view of wetlands and still ponds with wading egrets and herons. Stands of loblolly and other pines possessively circle this hideaway for other wildlife – including bald eagles, otters, woodpeckers, deer and an abundance of wild turkey. The tower sits on a narrow bridge of land, affording expansive views on both sides of Mulberry Pond and 65 Acre Pond. The view at sunset is more than worth the visit.

Assawoman Wildlife Area is located between Routes 26 to the north and 54 to the south, and you can access the area from either route. GPS should get you there if you enter "Delaware Assawoman Wildlife Area." It's open from sunrise to sunset. Bring your camera and your binoculars for a memorable experience.

Parts of state wildlife areas are open to hunting, so check DNREC's hunting guide for season dates and locations, and consider wearing hunter orange if you plan to venture into these areas during hunting season. For more information, call 302-739-9912 on weekdays.

A Conservation Access Pass is required.

CAROL ANDERS RIGGS





MARITIME EXCHANGE PILOTS ASSOCIATION

Maritime Exchange Tower

3 ALTHOUGH THE PUBLIC doesn't normally have access to climb this tower, its mystery, purpose and history is of such significance that it's worth a look from the outside for those interested in the past and intrigued by Delaware's maritime activities. Often mistaken for a radar tower or modern lighthouse, few passersby actually know the tower's purpose.

Rising from among the dunes at the Point of Cape Henlopen State Park just south of Lewes, a high-tech, but cozy cupola sits incongruously atop a World War II-vintage observation tower. It is the workplace of little-known river pilots. To be exact, they are members of the Pilots' Association for the Bay & River Delaware, and the Philadelphia Maritime Exchange, which have been in place since 1896. Their view from atop the tower encompasses miles of waterway, and the equipment in the tower affords the pilots comprehensive ship-tracking capability.

The river pilots who work in the tower 24/7, and the nearby Pilot Station in Lewes, guide thousands of ships a year along the 120-mile stretch of potentially dangerous waters from the Atlantic to ports in the Delaware Bay and River, and other waterways. The tower is in communication with all large ships coming into the area, to which they dispatch pilots by boat from the Lewes station to rendezvous with the waiting ships. The pilots then board the vessels and direct the ships' voyages to their destination ports. All foreign vessels, and some U.S. ships as well, are required to have assistance from the 67 local pilots to navigate the bay and river. Last year, they piloted 4,800 inbound and outbound ships, along with 2,200 vessel movements within ports.

This being just the tip of the story, explore more history and information online at delpilots.org, and stop by for a look at the tower. There are parking and restroom facilities at the Point and a beautiful beach to enjoy.

A Delaware State Park pass is required.

Little Creek Observation Tower

4 AT TIMES, the view from the Little Creek observation tower will take your breath away. What you will be gazing over is the main Little Creek water impoundment, which is part of the larger 4,500-acre Little Creek Wildlife Area just east of Dover. Unlike many points along the numerous impoundments, the view from the tower is not blocked by invasive phragmites. This is definitely an adventure for which you will want to have your binoculars and camera in your backpack.

When the water level is high, you might see dozens of snowy white tundra swans that have settled on the water for feeding and staging before they continue on their migration. Or, when the water level is low, you might see hundreds of shorebirds wading in the shallow water. Even without a cluster of birds, the view is amazing.

As this goes to press, the tower and the boardwalk are scheduled to be rebuilt. The new structures will provide access for people with disabilities. Expected to be completed in late fall, the new tower will

be at least as tall as the current tower, but will have two viewing levels. The lower level will be connected to a ramp, giving visitors using wheelchairs or other mobility aides easy access to the spectacular view at 16 feet high, and the higher level will be accessed by steps and rise to over 26 feet.

Access to the tower is from Route 9. Traveling south for 1 mile from the intersection of South Little Creek Road and Route 9, turn left onto the unnamed road and follow it to the parking lot on the left and the observation tower sign. From the south, enter onto Route 9 just south of the Air Force Base, and travel 3 miles north to the unnamed road on the right. Follow the road to the parking area and the tower sign.

Parts of state wildlife areas are open to hunting, so check DNREC's hunting guide for season dates and locations, and consider wearing hunter orange if you plan to venture into these areas during hunting season. For more information, call 302-739-9912 on weekdays.

A Conservation Access Pass is required.



DENNIS HUSBAND

WWII Towers

5

They're not exactly off the beaten path, since they can be seen from one of Delaware's busiest highways and 11 are within three of Delaware's state parks. But many people drive or walk past Delaware's WWII "watch towers" without knowing their history, or that one is open to the public for climbing to the top.

Located in Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore and Fenwick Island state parks, these 1940s-vintage towers were built to be used by the military keeping watch for German ships and U-boats during WWII.

As part of coastal Fort Miles, the strategic placement of the towers and their expansive views allowed crews to pinpoint the location of enemy ships and radio that information to those manning the massive guns at Fort Miles.

One of the tallest towers is #7, the only one currently restored and open to climbing by the public. It rises proudly 70 feet high, with a grand view from the top across the Fort Miles Historical Area out to the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean. A restoration-funding campaign for Tower #3 was just recently announced, with the dramatic nighttime cobalt-blue lighting of the 57-foot tower. Following the restoration, Tower #3 will also allow visitors to climb to its viewing platform.

Tower #7 is located within Cape Henlopen State Park on Cape Henlopen Drive. There is a park entrance fee required to travel to the tower. Tower #3 is best viewed at night so the blue lighting can be enjoyed. It is located on Tower Road about 5 miles north of the Indian River Bridge. Since it is also within a state park, a park entrance fee will be in effect, although the tower is not open to climbing until it is restored.



APRIL ABEL

APRIL ABEL

FORT MILES UNDERGROUND MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL AREA

WHILE VISITING the World War II towers at Cape Henlopen State Park, check out the Battery 519 historical area. You can see vintage artillery there, including the big 16-inch gun that was originally part of the U.S.S. Missouri, and the secret underground bunker beneath the dunes – now a museum with war artifacts.

Call ahead for more information about the tour schedule and reservations for the underground museum: 302-645-0753.



LARRY KNOX

5 SPECIAL Water Trails LESS PADDED

Trussum Pond

1 TRANSPORT YOURSELF to the enchanting world of Trap Pond State Park in Laurel, and paddle through the northernmost natural grove of baldcypress trees on the East Coast. Trussum Pond, located about a mile west of the Trap Pond State Park entrance on Trap Pond Road on your left, is 58.7 acres – a perfect place for a unique, yet serene paddling adventure. Bring your own kayak or canoe, and drift through the sunlight-dappled trees in one of the most picturesque and less-paddled ponds in the state. There's a small parking area, and the boat ramp is in view of that.

The pond was created in the late 1700s to power a sawmill during the harvest of large baldcypress from the area. The federal government later purchased the pond and surrounding farmland during the 1930s and the Civilian Conservation Corps began to develop the area for recreation.

Take a kayak or canoe and paddle to the boat launch among the ancient baldcypress swamp to discover native birds, turtles, wildflowers and other species. The pond is also an excellent fishing spot, and resident fish include largemouth bass, black crappie, bluegill and pickerel.

After your paddle, be sure to stop by the nearby Baldcypress Nature Center, or explore a few of the park's many trails. You can even camp beneath a towering canopy of hardwoods and loblolly pines at the park's campground. Trap Pond's serene waters will leave you feeling refreshed and ready to plan your next visit.

A state park pass or entry fee is required.



DNREC DIV OF PARKS & REC



Sassafras Landing Launch

2 SASSAFRAS LANDING ROAD winds through the Assawoman Wildlife Area, to a spot on Miller Creek. You can put in a kayak or a canoe from a sandy beach and explore a quite special waterway rife with birds and the possibility of spotting wildlife along the banks. The creek, heading east, eventually leads you to Little Bay (north of The Narrows that lead into Little Assawoman Bay) near Route 1 and the Fenwick Island State Park boat ramp. Along the curvy waterway, there is opportunity to tie up and stretch your legs at Strawberry Landing Pier, and a rest area between the points of land called Big Sheep Hammock and Strawberry Point.

Paddling west curves around past Camp Barnes (a summer camp for young people run by the Delaware State Police) and eventually, to a housing development as well, but not before the landscape has afforded views of wetlands and forests that are home to a variety of critters.

Sassafras Landing itself is a quiet, pleasant spot to bring a picnic lunch and enjoy sitting on the sand before you launch. And it would not be unusual to meet birders checking out the area for shorebirds to add to their lists, who might give you tips on what birds you might spot. When launching from a Delaware Wildlife Area, it's always a good idea to bring binoculars and

a bird identification book in a waterproof bag to make the most of your paddle, since these areas are habitat for many species that won't be seen in more populated areas.

The wildlife area affords other launch areas, but this should definitely be on your list.



CAROL
ANDERS
RIGGS



MATT CARDONA

Scotton Landing Boat Ramp

3 SCOTTON LANDING, just south of Dover and providing access to the St. Jones River, has it all. An easy spot to launch a kayak or a canoe for paddling either east or west, the landing also has a pier for fishing or crabbing, and a pier accommodating people with disabilities for both activities as well. There is parking for about 10 cars, a porta-

potty and as fine a boat ramp as Delaware has to offer. The ramp is very easy to find, just off Route 1 south of the Air Force Base.

Like many rivers in Delaware, the St. Jones River is a serpentine tidal waterway meandering through a variety of landscapes and through developed areas, with its headwaters in Dover. Once you've launched, if you go east, you will venture through marshes, beautiful foliage, open water and wetlands. Continuing your paddle to the Delaware Bay will take you through the Ted Harvey Wildlife Area and the St. Jones Reserve. There have been reports of paddlers seeing many bald eagles on one trip as well as turtles and other wildlife. Going west takes you through marsh as well, and eventually into Dover past Legislative Hall. This ramp site is a great place to view sunrises and sunsets.

As with other paddles in Delaware, you will want to take your binoculars, camera and mosquito spray during warm seasons. This is a tidal river, so check the tides before you go – it's no fun paddling back to the landing against a strong tide when you are already tired.

The ramp is open year round, dawn to dusk, Sunday through Saturday. It is off Barkers Landing Road in Magnolia.

Roger C. Fisher Laurel River Park

4 TUCKED AWAY in downtown Laurel, and known to few, the beautiful Roger C. Fisher Park, managed by DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife, can easily be added to your list of afternoon getaways. Although the park does not have a physical address, it is located at the intersection of West 6th Street and Park Drive.

Entering by trail or road, you'll quickly notice the towering trees enclosing an open green field and playground. A large pavilion covering picnic tables and a grill sits closely overlooking Broad Creek, a tributary of the Nanticoke River. The park offers a boat ramp, a large fishing pier and

plenty of shady benches great for birding.

Paddling downstream offers increasingly scenic views of the water and local wildlife. Although the beautiful park can make you feel miles from town, paddling just a few minutes upstream, you'll pass Delaware's largest baldcypress tree. It stands 91 feet tall, with a girth of 258 inches and a crown spread of 75 feet. After passing that magnificent sight, you'll find yourself paddling along the town's riverfront walk, offering a floating kayak launch – managed by the town of Laurel – that makes it easy to hop out and visit some of the popular local eateries just feet away.

This summer at the park, DNREC's Division of Watershed Stewardship will host the Reclaim our River (ROR) Program's ECO paddle on



CAROL ANDERS RIGGS

June 23, offering an afternoon of guided canoeing/kayaking tours and information from the ROR partnership on how to protect Delaware's waterways. Visit delawarewatersheds.org to find out more.

The park is open dawn to dusk year-round, with rest-

rooms available seasonally. There is no charge to use the park and a Conservation Access Pass is not needed for access.

The current is moderate to strong, so it is important to check the tides before going out, and plan accordingly.

Blackbird Creek Paddle

5 USING A LAUNCH inside the DNERR Blackbird Creek Reserve, you can have a moderate paddle by canoe or kayak for about 7 miles, including both upstream and downstream. Blackbird Creek is a little-used waterway that snakes through wetlands, forests and wildlife areas protected by the state, before it reaches the Delaware River. There is also a launch at Staves Landing near the mouth of the creek that provides access to the Delaware River.

When heading downstream, also a curvy course, paddlers will see a variety of landscapes including farms, wooded uplands and open marshes. Heading upstream, the creek is shaded by mostly wooded banks along the way.

The tide can make this challenging if you find yourself paddling

against it, so be sure to check the tides and weather before you head out. There is a parking lot and porta-potty near the launch area, but be prepared to walk some distance with your kayak or canoe from the parking to the launch, so if you have a hand dolly for your boat, this is a good place to use it. It is worth the extra effort to launch from the reserve for a day on the creek because its winding nature makes each stretch of waterway a surprise until you navigate around each bend.

The reserve is where you access the launch, and it is on Blackbird Landing Road off Route 13 near Townsend. A picnic lunch can be enjoyed at the pavilion at the reserve, and if you have any energy left after your paddle, there are pleasant trails to walk.

Bring your binoculars if you like to do a little birding with your paddling.



Historic Attractions

WITHOUT THE BUSTLE

Indian River Life-Saving Station

IMAGINE A STORMY NIGHT off the coast of Delaware ... and your vessel founders, tossing its helpless crew and passengers into the white-capped waves to fight for their lives. Located on the edge of the ocean beach just off Delaware's Coastal Highway south of Rehoboth, the Indian River Life-Saving Station was a beacon of hope in centuries past, when night beach patrols and perilous high seas rescues were the only way to save shipwreck victims.

Today, the vibrant red and orange, National Register-listed Victorian structure stands out as a unique attraction at Delaware Seashore State Park. It was built in 1876 by the United States Life-saving Service, a then-federal government organization created to respond to shipwrecks along our coastlines – and the precursor to today's U.S. Coast Guard.

Displays and programs take visitors back in time with lantern tours, lighthouse history programs and beach archaeology. Other special offerings include beach bonfires; surf fishing and beach driving lessons; kayaking, biking, and hiking outings; and nautical art classes including painting, sea glass jewelry, and sailor's knot-tying.

Located at 25039 Coastal Highway, Rehoboth Beach, DE



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19971, the station is open daily from April 1-Oct. 31 and closed Monday-Wednesdays Nov. 1-April 1, with admission charged. For more information, call 302-227-6438 or 6991, or visit www.destateparks.com.

Tri-State Marker Trail, White Clay Creek State Park



CAROL ANDERS RIGGS

2 MORE THAN 250 YEARS AGO, a team of surveyors from England, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon – yes, that Mason and Dixon – placed a marker at the precise point where Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania meet: the point of the notch at the base of Delaware's distinctive northern arc boundary.

Until 2011, Mason and Dixon's historic marker was on private property and inaccessible to the public. That year, Pennsylvania purchased the lands around the marker, a parcel that connected to the Delaware state parks property, White Clay Creek Preserve.

Enter the Friends of White Clay Creek Preserve, who partnered with the Wilmington Trail Club to work with the State of Pennsylvania and secure grant funding to establish the Tri-State Marker Trail. Thousands of hours of parks staff and volunteer work later – including no less than five Eagle Scout projects, and complete with numerous bridges and boardwalks – the result is a four-mile hard-packed loop trail that passes through two states and provides the first public access to the marker, as well as a great walk.

And, when you reach the marker, position your feet just right ... and you'll be standing in three states at once.

The Tri-State Marker Trail is accessible from two places: the Arc Corner parking lot at the end of Arc Corner Road, off Chambers Rock Road in Landenberg, Pa., and from White Clay Creek State Park's Nature Center, off Hopkins Road in Newark. For more information, call the Nature Center at 302-368-6560, or visit www.destateparks.com.



APRIL ABEL

Marshall Steam Museum, Auburn Heights Preserve

3 AT DELAWARE'S Marshall Steam Museum in the Auburn Heights Preserve, the old phrase "full steam ahead!" is new again for visitors who have never seen – or, in many cases, have never even heard of – a steam-powered automobile, let alone seen one in operation.

Originally built in 1947 by T. Clarence Marshall to house his unique collection of antique vehicles, today's 8,000-square-foot museum displays the world's largest operating collection of Stanley steam cars, plus a 1916 electric car, two 1930s 12-cylinder Packards and other rare vehicles built between 1901 and 1937 at the dawn of the automotive age. Outside, built to 1/8th scale, a coal-fired Auburn Valley Railroad train steams around the property.

When you visit, keep an eye out for Tom Marshall, who, with his wife Ruth, donated his father's collection, museum, and property to the state of Delaware, and who still enjoys driving and working on the steam cars.

Visitors also can tour the beautiful 1897

Auburn Heights Mansion, the former Marshall family home located next to the museum, as well as walk, run, or bike the adjoining trails system through the scenic Auburn Valley. To see it all, check the on-line calendar for special public events such as Steamin' Days, when the steam cars will be out and about along the trails.

Located at 3000 Creek Road, Yorklyn, DE 19736, on the 390-acre Auburn

Heights Preserve, the Marshall Steam Museum and Auburn Heights Mansion are open to the public for tours by appointment from mid-March through December. Tickets are \$8 per person for the museum or mansion, or \$14 for both. To arrange a tour for eight or more, call 302-239-5687. For more information, visit www.destateparks.com/attractions/auburn-heights.



APRIL ABEL

Bethesda Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery

4 TUCKED AWAY in a quiet corner of Sussex County's Trap Pond State Park and still surrounded by farms and forests, the Bethesda Methodist Episcopal Church is a rare survivor of the once-common country churches that served as the religious and community centers of rural life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In those days, traveling lay ministers visited Bethesda's congregation weekly, along with other churches in Laurel's Methodist circuit.

Built at a cost of \$1,000 in 1879 to replace an earlier church, the small wooden Greek Revival-style building ceased holding services in the 1970s. In 2000, DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation purchased the church and its grounds, which includes a cemetery with 85 grave markers, which stand as an important historical record of local families, some of whom still live in the area.

With the support of the local community, the badly dilapidated little church was painstakingly restored, retaining as many original features as possible, including much of its interior wood trim, pews, and – amazingly – its piano. Following scientific testing, the exterior is painted in its original colors of cream and olive with a red door.

Located in the southwest corner of Trap Pond State Park near the intersection of Wooten and Whaley's roads near Laurel, Bethesda Church is available for small weddings and other private or public special events. The grounds, parking area and restrooms are open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset. Park staff also open the church for tours on select Sundays. To schedule an event or tour, or for more information, call the Bald Cypress Nature Center at 302-875-5163, or visit www.destateparks.com.



APRIL ABEL



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Blue Ball Barn

5 ART AND HISTORY meet in Alapocas Run State Park's Blue Ball Barn in Wilmington. Built in 1914 as part of Alfred I. duPont's dairy operation, the restored and repurposed landmark structure now houses the Delaware Folk Art Collection, as well as providing a unique gathering space for meetings, weddings and other public and private events both indoors and outdoors.

Starting in the 1990s, DNREC's Delaware Folklife Program gathered a vibrant cross section of the diversity of cultures found in the First State. The 50 artists whose work is on display come from all walks of life, from a Sussex poultry plant worker to a Dover pediatrician to a forester from

Claymont. Materials range from the very familiar – fabric, wood and canvas – to the very unusual – discarded styrofoam, old car parts and egg shells. Also on display are exhibits on dairy farming and local history.

The barn was named for the 1700s-era Blue Ball Inn. The nearby Inn, which was torn down

in the 1970s, took its name from the blue ball that innkeepers used as a signal for stagecoach drivers. Alfred I. duPont bought the property in 1908, and started a dairy operation to supply his nearby Nemours Estate, building the then-state-of-the-art barn out of concrete and reinforced steel. Both the Blue Ball Dairies business and barn were abandoned in 1977.

The Blue Ball Barn, which earned LEED certification for its environmentally-friendly systems, is located near the intersection of Route 141 and West Park Drive just north of Wilmington, and is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, except state holidays. For more information, call 302-577-1164 or visit www.destateparks.com.



APRIL ABEL

5 Fishing Holes

WITHOUT THE CROWDS

Aquatic Resources Education Center (AREC) Ponds

1 THERE ARE TWO SMALL, easily accessible ponds at the Aquatic Resources Education Center (AREC) east of Smyrna – the Cathy Martin Fishing Pond and the AREC Pond, both of which offer great fishing opportunities for families with young children.

These ponds are catch and release-only, with only barbless hooks allowed. The Cathy Martin Pond is nearly an acre with a T-shaped aluminum fishing pier fully accessible to those in wheelchairs. You can find largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, pumpkinseed and channel catfish here.

Across from the Cathy Martin Pond is the AREC Pond, a half-acre pond with bank fishing. You can catch largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed and yellow bullhead. Light spinning and spincasting tackle is fine for fishing these ponds, with fishing best from spring through the fall.

Both ponds are accessible from a parking lot located adjacent to Delaware Route 9 (Hay Point Landing Road) between Delaware Route 6 (Woodland Beach Road) and Lighthouse Road.

If you are actively fishing, you can access this area 24 hours a day, otherwise it is open dawn to dusk. A Conservation Access Pass is not needed to park and fish here.



ROB GANO

Edward R. Koch Fishing Area

2 THE EDWARD R. KOCH Fishing Area is a beautiful spot along Broad Creek west of Laurel that offers bank fishing for a variety of fish species. This is a good spot to fish for catfish, sunfish and white perch, with catch and release-only fishing for river herring and shad during their spring spawning runs.

Sturdy bait casting or spinning tackle will work fine for the catfish, with lighter tackle best for the perch, sunfish, river herring and shad. Large blue catfish, an invasive species whose population has exploded in Chesapeake Bay tributaries – including Broad Creek – can be caught here. So make sure your tackle is up to the task if you are targeting the big ones. After all, the state record catfish, which weighed over 36 lbs., was caught in the Nanticoke River last year near the mouth of Broad Creek. While fishing can be best in the spring, fish can be caught in the summer and fall except for river herring and shad.

To get there, follow the signs on Route 13 for the Phillips Landing Fishing Access Area. Take Bethel Road through Bethel and over Broad Creek, and continue on Shell Bridge Road to the Edward R. Koch Fishing Area. It's located a short distance on your right near Portsville Pond.

If you are actively fishing, you can access this area 24 hours a day, otherwise it is open dawn to dusk. A Conservation Access Pass is not needed to park and fish here.



DNREC DIV OF FISH & WILDLIFE



DNREC DIV OF FISH & WILDLIFE

Staves Landing

3 NEW CASTLE COUNTY is Delaware's most populous county, but it still has its beautiful, off-the-beaten-track fishing spots like Staves Landing in the Cedar Swamp Wildlife Area northeast of Smyrna.

You can access Blackbird Creek by small boat from the unimproved, dirt boat ramp. There is limited shore fishing on the Blackbird Creek near

the boat ramp, but the more adventurous angler can find more shore fishing by taking a mile-long walk on the dirt road from the parking lot gate to the Appoquinimink River.

The Blackbird and Appoquinimink are both good spots for white perch and catfish, plus some striped bass. Spring is the best time for white perch and striped bass fishing, but the fishing can also be good in the summer and fall.

Sturdy bait casting or spinning combos will work fine at these spots. To get there, turn east on Staves Landing Road off Delaware Route 9 a few miles south of Delaware Route 299, and continue on Staves Landing Road until you reach the boat ramp. If you are actively fishing, you can access this area 24 hours a day, otherwise it is open dawn to dusk.

A Conservation Access Pass is required.

Memorial Pond

4 MEMORIAL POND is a great place to wet a line. It's located on the Miller Neck Tract of the Assawoman Wildlife Area near Bethany, and it's home to largemouth bass, bluegill and pumpkinseeds.

The pond is catch-and-release-only, and barbless hooks are required, offering great fishing opportunities for families with young children. Light spinning and spincasting tackle is fine for fishing this pond, with fishing best from spring through the fall.

To get to Memorial Pond, follow the signs to the Assawoman Wildlife Area by taking Camp Barnes Road and bear right at the fork on Mulberry Landing Road. Then, turn right onto Strawberry Landing Road, and continue through the gate for about a mile to the pond. There is a parking lot next to it.

If you are actively fishing, you can access this area 24 hours a day, otherwise it is open dawn to dusk. A Conservation Access Pass is not needed to park and fish.



DNREC DIV OF FISH & WILDLIFE



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Raccoon Pond

5 THIS BEAUTIFUL little pond, located upstream from Trap Pond, is part of Trap Pond State Park, and is east of Laurel. Angling access is limited there, though small car-top boats, and canoes and kayaks, can be launched at a small, unimproved area to the left of the dam, next to the guard rail.

Shoreline angling is limited to the area along the dam and a small area on the northwestern shore. There are some big largemouth bass in the pond, along with other pond favorites that include bluegills, black crappie and chain pickerel, as well as American eel and brown bullhead.

Bait casting, spinning and even fly fishing gear can work. Bait or lures – it's the angler's choice. Pond fishing is best from spring through the fall.

Raccoon Pond is found by turning off Delaware Route 24 south onto Whaleys Road and then taking a right on Wootten Road. Parking is recommended at the restored Bethesda Church on Wootten Road.

A state park pass or entry fee is required.

New online interactive pond maps for Delaware anglers are now available

New maps provide up-to-date information for fishing

ATENTION ANGLERS! Newly-interactive online maps enable anglers to easily locate Delaware's public freshwater ponds throughout the state. The public ponds, most of which are managed by the Division of Fish & Wildlife, range from five to 189 acres, and support a variety of gamefish. The application can be used on mobile devices and can be found on the DNREC alpha website's Public Pond Page.

The maps include useful details about each pond, such as access, depth contours, flow direction, areas of prominent vegetation and surface acreage. Satellite imagery provides an on-the-ground perspective and allows users to zoom into specific areas on the pond or to zoom out to get a landscape perspective. Up-to-date research on the gamefish in each pond is included so anglers can plan their outing to cast for their favorite gamefish. Aquatic vegetation management and shoreline and boating access information is provided for each pond.

The interactive maps also include updated information on nine small DNREC-owned ponds. These ponds, which range in size from one-half to 10 acres, are geared for bank fishing, and are ideal for beginners and youth anglers. For additional information on small pond angling in Delaware, visit <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/small-pond-angling/>.

Delaware's non-tidal fishing regulations apply and a general fishing license is required for most anglers who fish these ponds and other waters throughout the state. Delaware fishing licenses are sold online, at the licensing office in DNREC's Richardson & Robbins Building at 89 Kings Highway in Dover, and by license agents statewide. To find a participating agent nearest you, or to purchase a license online, visit Delaware Licenses. For additional information on Delaware fishing licenses, call 302-739-9918.

For more information on fishing in Delaware, click on 2018 Delaware Fishing Guide. The guide also is available in printed form at DNREC's Dover licensing desk, and from license agents throughout the state.

Eateries

HANDY TO OUTDOOR FUN



DEERFIELD



DNREC DIV OF PARKS & REC

Hammerheads Dockside at the Indian River Marina

1 PULL UP YOUR BOAT — or daydream about your new boat — at Hammerheads Dockside. Overlooking the gorgeous Indian River Marina, Hammerheads Dockside is an island getaway, and the perfect place to enjoy a sunset, a good meal and a cold drink.

Hammerheads Dockside is a full-service restaurant offering a fresh, vibrant menu including coastal dishes and specialty cocktails. Live bands play seven nights a week in season, and amazing sunsets combined with swaying palm trees will immediately put you in a coastal state of mind. The primary dining area is filled with sand and beachy picnic tables, but there is also shade available if you're looking for a break from the sun.

Hammerheads Dockside is conveniently located inside Delaware Seashore State Park, only minutes away from Bethany Beach, Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach.

After your meal, explore Delaware Seashore State Park and hike a trail, tour the historic Indian River Life-Saving Station, or just hit the beach. Cast away your worries, grab a bite to eat, and take in the views from Hammerheads Dockside. You'll want to come back again and again.

Hammerheads is located at 39415 Inlet Road, Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971. No park admission fee is required to visit the restaurant. The Marina offers Hammerheads Dockside customers complimentary designated dockage (subject to availability) while they are at the restaurant. Check the website for seasons, dates and hours:

<http://www.hammerheadsde.com/dockside/>

Over a Campfire

2 THERE IS NOTHING quite like the smoky goodness of homemade food cooked over a campfire. DNREC'S Division of Parks & Recreation offers five campgrounds throughout the state where you can camp beneath a forest canopy, beside a pond, or within walking distance of the beach, and then enjoy a hot meal over the campfire. Try camping in an RV, tent, cabin, cottage, or even a yurt. Whatever your style, you are sure to find your perfect camping experience in a state park. Campgrounds are located in Lums Pond, Killens Pond, Trap Pond, Delaware Seashore and Cape Henlopen state parks.

Campfire recipes offer freedom for experimentation and fun, and you can cook a wide variety of meals over the fire, including burgers, macaroni and cheese, banana boats and more. Now is the perfect time to plan a camping weekend with your family and friends.

Both campfires and grills are permitted, except at Delaware Seashore State Park, where campfires are not permitted at any time. Campers are asked to use firewood sold at the campground or from local sources near the park, rather than bringing wood from outside the state. This helps prevent the spread of harmful insect pests to Delaware's parks and forests.

A state park entrance fee or annual pass is required, and camping can be reserved online or by calling the Campground Reservation System at 1-877-98PARKS.

Enjoy the great outdoors and a great meal at the same time in a state park.



MARIA DEFORREST

Grain H2O at Summit North Marina

3 GRAIN H2O takes all the fun food, drink and atmosphere of the “Grain” restaurants and puts it on the water. Located in the newly renovated Summit North Marina on the C&D Canal in Bear, you can reach this delicious restaurant by car, boat or even by bike from the Michael N. Castle Trail. Indoor and outdoor bars, live music, a big covered patio, and award-winning food creations make Grain H2O a great escape.

Try Mahi Mahi tacos, the big OMG pretzel, buttermilk fried chicken or an impressive array of signature sandwiches. With 20 craft beers on tap and more than 50 in the fridge, there’s no shortage of beer to choose from. Throughout the week, enjoy Bingo nights, trivia challenges, and live music on the weekends. Grain H2O is open Monday–Friday 11:30 a.m. – 1 a.m., Saturday 10 a.m. – 1 a.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. – 11 p.m.



APRIL ABEL

Summit North Marina is open year-round for all of your boating needs, and includes more than 300 floating finger pier and outer floating perimeter dockage for loyal slip holders and valuable transient visitors.

The marina is also located near Lums Pond State Park, so after your meal, visit

the park where you can hike, kayak or zipline through the trees at Go Ape Tree-top Adventures.

Grain H2O is located at 3006 Summit Harbour Lane in Bear. Check out their website for special happenings: <https://meetatgrain.com/h2o-restaurant/>



DEERFIELD

Deerfield Golf Course

4 VOTED “Delaware’s Best Sunday Brunch” for seven years straight, Deerfield Golf Course, located in White Clay Creek State Park, offers more than 111 feet of “brunchy goodness” on select Sundays from early May through late September.

Brunch at Deerfield is not just brunch. It’s an event that you, family and friends will remember, and return to again and again. Sunday Brunch at Deerfield features everything you might expect and more. Prepare to enjoy Millionaire’s Bacon infused with chili powder, a Sunrise Station featuring made-to-order eggs, a new pasta station, a meat carvery, fresh eggs benedict, a kids’ buffet, yogurt parfaits and an ice cream sundae bar, among the delicious selections.

A most appealing feature of the dining area is seeing the rolling hills through the

expansive windows that also offer sweeping views of the 18-hole public golf course located just outside.

Special events include Mother’s Day brunch, Easter Brunch and Brunch with Santa. After brunch, you can play a round or two on the green. Deerfield is located within White Clay Creek State Park in

Newark, so take a day to enjoy brunch, the golf course and the winding trails of White Clay Creek.

For more information, visit <https://deerfieldgolfclub.com>. Deerfield is located at 507 Thompson Station Road, Newark DE 19711.

Big Chill Beach Club

5 BRUSH THE SAND OFF and grab a seat at Delaware Seashore State Park’s newest restaurant, the Big Chill Beach Club. The main dining area consists of a 200-seat rooftop deck, with umbrella bar, that sits oceanfront at the corner of the Indian River Inlet and the Atlantic Ocean, at the south side of the park in North Bethany.

Enjoy stunning 360-degree views of the Atlantic Ocean, Indian River Inlet and Indian River Bay, while dining on delicious beach cuisine including burgers, tacos, crinkle-cut fries or oysters from the Oyster Bar. After your meal, you can hang out by the fire pit below, take the short walk to the beach, or explore all that Delaware Seashore State Park has to offer, including trails, kayaking, hiking, camping, educational programming and more.

The Big Chill embraces the beach lifestyle, so slow down, chill out and spend some time at the south side of the Indian River inlet. It’s a dining experience you won’t forget.

Big Chill Beach Club is located at 27099 Coastal Hwy, Bethany Beach. For seasons, days and hours the restaurant is open visit their website at: <https://www.bigchill-beachclub.com/>.

JOEL T. DEMOTT



50 WAYS to ESCAPE the ORDINARY

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